

When you sing gospel you have a feeling there is a cure for what's wrong

—Mahalia Jackson

DISCUSS

THE SPEAKING TREE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 20, 2015

03

'Love is the best formula'

Guest editor

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN
points out that love is
the bottom line
of all three Semitic
religions

There are three religions in the Semitic family: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In historical order, Judaism comes first, Christianity second and Islam third. One teaching is common to all the three religions, that is, love. During a visit to the US, I was invited by an American Church to deliver a lecture on Islam and peace. After my lecture, a Christian scholar asked: 'In Christianity, there is a moral injunction: 'Love your enemy'. Can you cite any such teaching from the Islamic scripture?'

Friends With All

I replied in the affirmative. In fact, all three Semitic religions have this precept in common. For example, the *Old Testament*, which is the sacred book of Judaism, says: 'Hatred stirs up disension, but love overlooks all offences.' (*Proverbs 10:12*) It is recorded in the *Bible* that Jesus once said: 'You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy." But I say to you, love your enemies; pray for those who persecute you.' (*Matthew 5:43-44*)

Now let me quote what is said by Islam. In one of its chapters, the *Quran* says: 'Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil with what is better;



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan worked closely with *The Speaking Tree* editorial team for this special Christmas issue that presents aspects of all three Abrahamic faiths, known as the Semitic religions. All three have their genesis in the same region, sharing similar stories, names and geographies. The idea was to present the Semitic religions — Judaism, Christianity and Islam — in

one issue, on the eve of the Prophet's birthday as well as the birthday of Jesus Christ.

Founder of the *Centre for Peace and Spirituality International*, Maulana, respected widely as a liberal Islamic scholar, is the recipient of several peace awards and has worked relentlessly to achieve communal harmony by following Gandhian values of nonviolence.

then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend.' (*41:34*)

This Quranic teaching dispels the 'we and they' concept. By nature, everyone is your friend. The only difference is that some are your actual friends while others are your potential friends. So try to turn this potential into actuality. This is the best formula for universal brotherhood and is common to all the three religions:

Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Love is the greatest human virtue. Where there is love, everything is in harmony, and where there is hate, all that is good remains in jeopardy.

The fact is that difference is part of nature. It has rightly been said: 'Nature abhors uniformity.' This being so, it is but natural that differences will arise between individuals and groups. Then what is the solution? Love is the only answer.

What is the rationale behind the 'love-all' formula? It is that every other person is your benefactor. It is your lack of awareness of this fact that makes you unable to adopt this love-all culture. We are living in a civilisation. Whatever we make use of is a gift of this civilisation. What is civilisation? It is an advanced stage of refinement in ethical and material matters resulting from continuous effort on the part of all mankind.

For example, when man started his life on planet earth, human existence was in a primitive state. It took thousands of years of joint efforts of humanity to bring civilisation into existence. For example, in the beginning, man used to walk on his own two legs. Then he started travelling on horseback. After long experience, the wheel was developed, thanks to which travel by car was made possible.

Love All

The uses of steam power were later discovered and travel by steamship and rail began. Man then produced airplanes which made air travel possible and further facilitated the means of contact and communication. All this was not the work of any single human being; all of humanity was involved in this process.

The discovery of this reality about history gives rise to the culture of 'love all', while unawareness of this leads to the 'hate all' culture. The truth is that in this world the most realistic formula is that of 'love all' and the most unrealistic formula is 'hate all'. This is why all three Semitic religions teach us that we should love all others — even if they appear to be our 'enemies'. ■

Follow Maulana Wahiduddin Khan at speakingtree.in